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ABSTRACT

Rarely have school districts had the opportunity for an indepth examination of themselves such as the times now offer. In order to do this professionally, a master plan should be created. The plan should consist of a comprehensive statement of the district's long-range goals and the procedures for their implementation. Once developed, this master plan should be used to solve the dual problems of space shortage and space surplus. (Author)

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SPACE SHORTAGE, SPACE SURPLUS, RENOVATIONS: THE PRINCIPAL AND SCHOOL PLANT PLANNING

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DESPITE THE TITLE OF THIS PAPER, I DO NOT WISH TO SUGGEST THAT THE TOPICS ARE THE EXCLUSIVE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE BUILDING PRINCIPAL. RATHER, THIS PRESENTATION IS DESIGNED TO PROVIDE APPROPRIATE BACKGROUND INFORMATION FOR WHATEVER TASKS A PRINCIPAL MIGHT BE ASSIGNED RELATIVE TO SCHOOL FACILITY PLANNING AND UTILIZATION.

PERHAPS MORE THAN AT ANY OTHER RECENT TIME, EFFECTIVE LONG-RANGE PLANNING FOR SCHOOL DISTRICTS IS AN IMPERATIVE TODAY. PROMPTED BY A DECLINING BIRTH RATE AND A VERY SOFT ECONOMY, SCHOOL DISTRICTS THROUGHOUT THE NATION ARE IN TROUBLE. WHILE JUST A SHORT TIME AGO SCHOOLS WERE OFTEN OVERCROWDED, REQUIRING DOUBLE SESSIONS AND CURTAILMENT OF SOME PROGRAMS, MANY OF THESE SAME SCHOOLS NOW HAVE EMPTY ROOMS. AND SOME DISTRICTS EVEN HAVE EMPTY SCHOOLS. THE QUESTION IS, WHAT CAN AND SHOULD BE DONE WITH THESE UNDER-USED OR UNUSED SCHOOL FACILITIES?

TO START, THIS PERIOD OF SO-CALLED "ENROLLMENT STABLIZATION" SHOULD BE WELCOMED AS AN IDEAL TIME FOR THE REVIEW AND RE-EVALUATION OF OUR CURRENT PROGRAMS AND EXISTING FACILITIES, AS WELL AS AN OPPORTUNITY FOR SERIOUS PREPARATION FOR THE FUTURE. THAT IS, THE TIMES SEEM BOTH TO JUSTIFY AND TO PERMIT MORE AND BETTER EDUCATIONAL PLANNING FOR THE CHANGE AND EXPANSION OF PROGRAMS AND FACILITIES FOR FUTURE IMPLEMENTATION.

BUT HOW SHOULD SUCH EFFECTIVE LONG-RANGE PLANNING BE APPROACHED?

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FIRST, APART FROM WHATEVER THE PRESENT OR FUTURE ENROLLMENTS MAY BE, THE MAJOR OBJECTIVE OF EDUCATIONAL PLANNING MUST ALWAYS BE THE IMPROVEMENT OF THE CURRICULUM AND ITS DELIVERY SYSTEM IN ORDER TO KEEP PACE WITH THE DEMANDS OF AN EVER-CHANGING, TECHNOLOGICAL SOCIETY. THIS CANNOT BE ACHIEVED SUCCESSFULLY WITHOUT A "MASTER PLAN," WHICH IS A COMPREHENSIVE STATEMENT OF THE DISTRICT'S LONG-RANGE GOALS, TOGETHER WITH THE PROCEDURES FOR THEIR EVENTUAL IMPLEMENTATION.

MASTER PLANNING

BUT EXACTLY HOW SHOULD A "MASTER PLAN" BE FORMULATED? ALLOW ME TO LIST AND BRIEFLY DESCRIBE THE STEPS:

1. REVIEW AND EVALUATE PRESENT PROGRAMS AND PRACTICES IN LIGHT OF CURRENT STATUTORY REGULATIONS, TRENDS AND INNOVATIONS IN EDUCATION, AT BOTH THE STATE AND NATIONAL LEVELS.

EVERY SCHOOL DISTRICT OUGHT TO DEVELOP A DEFINITE PROCEDURE FOR KEEPING ABREAST OF NEW LEGISLATION AND NEW IDEAS IN EDUCATION. THIS CAN BE ACCOMPLISHED BY HAVING EVERY DEPARTMENT, DISCIPLINE OR GRADE LEVEL MAINTAIN AND UPDATE A FILE OF PROFESSIONAL MATERIALS FROM STATE AND NATIONAL AGENCIES AND PUBLICATIONS, UNDER THE SUPERVISION OF A CURRICULUM COORDINATOR, AND BY REGULAR ATTENDANCE, ON A ROTATIONAL BASIS, AT PROFESSIONAL CONFERENCES, SEMINARS AND WORKSHOPS.

2. EXAMINE AND APPRAISE EXISTING SCHOOL BUILDINGS IN TERMS OF THEIR STRUCTURAL ABILITIES TO ADAPT TO CURRICULAR CHANGES.

ALONG WITH DISTRICT PERSONNEL, OUTSIDE EXPERTS SUCH AS ARCHITECTS, MECHANICAL ENGINEERS AND EDUCATIONAL CONSULTANTS SHOULD BE EN-

GAGED TO EXECUTE IN-DEPTH INSPECTIONS AND ANALYSES OF PRESENT SCHOOL FACILITIES IN ORDER TO ASCERTAIN THEIR STRUCTURAL INTEGRITY AND THEIR ADAPTABILITY TO ACCOMMODATE FUTURE PROGRAMS AND PRACTICES.

3. CONDUCT COMMUNITY-WIDE SURVEYS TO DETERMINE THE ECONOMIC GROWTH POTENTIAL AND ITS RESULTANT IMPACT ON LOCAL EDUCATION IN THE FUTURE.

AS SCHOOL DISTRICTS SHOULD NEVER EXPECT TO FUNCTION IN A VACUUM, FREQUENT SURVEYS OF LOCAL BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY ARE ESSENTIAL TO DISCOVER WHAT EFFECT ANY EXPANSION, DECLINE OR CHANGE OF THRUST OF THE LOCAL ECONOMY MIGHT HAVE ON THE POPULATION AT LARGE AND THE CURRICULUM IN GENERAL.

4. CONDUCT ANNUAL PRE-SCHOOL CENSUSES AND DISTRICT-WIDE ENROLLMENT PROJECTIONS FOR COMPARISON AND EVALUATION.

TOGETHER WITH THE DATA SECURED FROM THE ECONOMIC SURVEYS JUST MENTIONED, YEARLY PRE-SCHOOL COUNTS AND ENROLLMENT PREDICTIONS ARE IMPERATIVE FOR EFFECTIVE LONG-RANGE PLANNING. BY COMPILING ACCURATE RECORDS OF THE NUMBER OF CHILDREN OF PRE-SCHOOL AGE, BOTH FROM BIRTHS AND IMMIGRATION, AND CONTINUALLY UPGRADING SCHOOL ENROLLMENT FIGURES, SCHOOL DISTRICTS CAN MORE EASILY PREPARE FOR FUTURE PUPIL POPULATIONS.

5. INVESTIGATE MODERN ARCHITECTURAL FORMS, CONSTRUCTION METHODS AND BUILDING MATERIALS.

DURING THE COMING DECADES, WE CAN EXPECT TO SEE SIGNIFICANT CHANGES IN SCHOOL SHAPES AND TEXTURES, BOTH EXTERNAL AND INTERNAL. NO LONGER WILL SCHOOL PLANNERS AND ARCHITECTS BE LIMITED TO THE CONVENTIONAL GEOMETRIC CONFIGURATIONS OF THE PAST OR TO THE TRADITIONAL BUILDING MATERIALS OF BRICK, STONE AND MORTAR. SCHOOL DISTRICTS MUST

MAKE A CONCERTED EFFORT TO BE INFORMED OF THESE DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION ADVANCEMENTS.

6. PREPARE FOR POSSIBLE PURCHASE, LEASE OR SALE OF SCHOOL SITES AND SCHOOL BUILDINGS.

WITH THE INFORMATION REGARDING POTENTIAL ECONOMIC GROWTH, PRE-SCHOOL CENSUSES AND ACTUAL ENROLLMENT PROJECTIONS, SCHOOL DISTRICTS SHOULD NOTE HOUSING AND BUSINESS PATTERNS AND PINPOINT SITES AND SCHOOLS FOR POSSIBLE FUTURE ACTION. BY DOING THIS WELL IN ADVANCE OF NEED, SCHOOL DISTRICTS CAN GUARANTEE FAIRLY UNIFORM GROWTH AND WILL ALSO BE ABLE TO REDUCE LAND AND FACILITY SPECULATION PROBLEMS LATER ON.

7. DEVELOP EDUCATIONAL SPECIFICATIONS FOR FUTURE PROJECTS - RENOVATION, ADDITIONS, NEW CONSTRUCTION.

EDUCATIONAL SPECIFICATIONS ARE THE DETAILED, WRITTEN DOCUMENT FROM WHICH A SCHOOL ARCHITECT IS ABLE TO DESIGN DURABLE, FUNCTIONAL AND ADAPTABLE SCHOOL STRUCTURES AND ENVIRONMENTS. THE DEVELOPMENT OF THIS DOCUMENT IS OFTEN THE RESPONSIBILITY OF SCHOOL PRINCIPALS, IN CONJUNCTION WITH STAFF PERSONNEL, STUDENTS, PARENTS, CITIZENS AND OUTSIDE CONSULTANTS. A PROPERLY EXECUTED EDUCATIONAL SPECIFICATION PROPOSAL WILL CONTAIN THE FOLLOWING CATEGORIES: STATEMENT OF PHILOSOPHY, GRADE OR CLASS LEVELS TO BE ACCOMMODATED, ENROLLMENT CAPACITY EXPECTATIONS, CURRICULAR PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES, SPECIFIC UTILIZATION PLAN, INSTRUCTIONAL PROCEDURES, TEACHING SPACE REQUIREMENTS, SPECIALIZED INSTRUCTIONAL FACILITIES, AUXILIARY AREAS, MISCELLANEOUS CONCERNS, AND A SUMMARY STATEMENT. (PERHAPS WE CAN COVER THIS IN MORE DETAIL LATER ON.)

8. DEVELOP AN ON-GOING PUBLIC DISSEMINATION PROGRAM OF THE SCHOOL DISTRICT'S ACTIVITIES AND OBJECTIVES.

ONE OF THE MAJOR REASONS FOR PUBLIC REJECTION OF SCHOOL DISTRICT REQUESTS FOR FUNDING OF EDUCATIONAL CHANGE AND NEW FACILITIES HAS BEEN THE LACK OF CONVINCING INFORMATION. IT IS EXTREMELY IMPORTANT TO MAKE VISIBLE EFFORTS TO KEEP THE GENERAL PUBLIC APPRISED OF THE PROGRESS AND DIRECTION OF THE LOCAL SCHOOLS AND TO SOLICIT AND ACKNOWLEDGE THE COMMUNITY'S EDUCATIONAL EXPECTATIONS.

IT MUST BE STRESSED AT THIS POINT THAT CARRYING OUT THE EIGHT STEPS JUST DESCRIBED AND FORMULATING A "MASTER PLAN," PREDICATED ON THE DISTRICT'S LONG-RANGE GOALS, ARE NO MEAN TASKS AND WILL INVOLVE HUNDREDS OF INDIVIDUALS AND MONTHS OF DISCUSSION, RESEARCH, VISITATION AND WRITING.

SPACE SHORTAGE

HAVING EXECUTED THE ABOVE TASKS, HOW MIGHT THE MASTER PLAN BE APPLIED TO THE PROBLEM OF SPACE SHORTAGE? IN THE EVENT THAT THE SPACE SHORTAGE IS NOT A TEMPORARY CONDITION, THE MATTER NARROWS DOWN TO THREE, INTERRELATED QUESTIONS:

1. IS THE AVAILABLE SPACE BEING UTILIZED EFFICIENTLY?
2. CAN THE SPACE BE REMODELED OR ADDED TO EFFECTIVELY?
3. WILL THE PUBLIC SUPPORT THE BUILDING OF NEW SCHOOLS?

ONCE AGAIN, THE BUILDING PRINCIPAL, IN CONCERT WITH TEACHERS STUDENTS, PARENTS, CITIZENS AND PERHAPS OUTSIDE EDUCATIONAL CONSULTANTS, WILL HAVE THE LEADERSHIP RESPONSIBILITY OF ASCERTAINING THE ANSWER TO

THIS FIRST QUESTION, REGARDING THE EFFICIENT USE OF AVAILABLE SPACE. BECAUSE THERE ARE SO MANY VARIABLES INVOLVED (SUCH AS COURSE OFFERINGS, ENROLLMENT PREDICTIONS, TEACHING PROCEDURES AND SCHEDULING TECHNIQUES), THERE ARE NO HARD AND FAST RULES TO BE APPLIED TO THIS PROBLEM. THE PRINCIPAL WILL SIMPLY HAVE TO EXERCISE HIS OR HER PROFESSIONAL JUDGMENT.

WITH RESPECT TO THE SECOND QUESTION, EFFECTIVE REMODELING OR ADDITIONS TO EXISTING FACILITIES, THERE ARE TWO STAGES. THE FIRST STAGE IS THE DEVELOPMENT OF EDUCATIONAL SPECIFICATIONS AND THE SECOND STAGE IS THE EVALUATION OF THE PHYSICAL FACILITIES BY OUTSIDE EXPERTS TO DETERMINE IF THE STRUCTURE CAN BE MODIFIED TO ACCOMMODATE THOSE EDUCATIONAL SPECIFICATIONS.

FINALLY, ASSUMING THAT NEW FACILITIES ARE INDEED REQUIRED, BASED ON THE ANSWERS TO THE PREVIOUS QUESTIONS, PROPER EDUCATIONAL SPECIFICATIONS MUST BE DEVELOPED AS WELL AS A WELL-PLANNED AND EXECUTED PUBLIC RELATIONS CAMPAIGN TO INFORM AND HOPEFULLY TO INSURE PUBLIC ACCEPTANCE OF THE PROPOSED PROJECT.

SPACE SURPLUS

PERHAPS MORE APPROPRIATE FOR THE TIMES, HOW SHOULD THE MASTER PLAN BE APPLIED TO THE PROBLEM OF SPACE SURPLUS? HAVING THE DATA FROM COMMUNITY SURVEYS, PRE-SCHOOL CENSUSES AND ENROLLMENT PROJECTIONS, THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS SHOULD BE ANSWERED:

1. CAN PRESENT SURPLUS SPACE BE UTILIZED EFFICIENTLY NOW FOR OTHER EDUCATIONALLY ORIENTED ACTIVITIES?

2. CAN PRESENT SURPLUS SPACE BE ADAPTED EFFECTIVELY TO SUIT THE EDUCATIONAL NEEDS OF FUTURE CLIENTELE?

3. CAN AND SHOULD PRESENT SURPLUS SPACE BE LEASED OR SOLD TO NON-EDUCATIONAL AGENCIES?

FIRST, WE MUST RECOGNIZE THAT MOST SCHOOL OFFICIALS ARE LOATH TO RELINQUISH POSSESSION OR CONTROL OF EXISTING SCHOOL FACILITIES. AND THIS IS A NATURAL REACTION, CONSIDERING THAT IT HAS OFTEN BEEN A STRUGGLE ORIGINALLY TO OBTAIN THOSE FACILITIES IN MANY DISTRICTS. THEREFORE, ATTEMPTING TO UTILIZE PRESENT SURPLUS SPACE TO PROVIDE A VARIETY OF EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCES AND SERVICES IS BOTH UNDERSTANDABLE AND GENERALLY COMMENDABLE.

BUT WHAT COULD BE AN INITIAL RATIONALE FOR SUCH ACTION? WELL, THE PUBLIC DOES NOT LIKE TO SEE SCHOOL PROPERTY STANDING IDLE. IN CASES WHERE PUPILS HAVE BEEN TRANSFERRED TO ANOTHER LOCATION, REGARDLESS OF THE MERITS OF THAT MOVEMENT, PARENTS AND CITIZENS OFTEN REACT VEHEMENTLY TO VACANT SCHOOLS IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD. SUCH SURPLUS SPACE MUST, THEREFORE, BE PUT TO EDUCATIONALLY JUSTIFIED USES. AMONG THESE POSSIBLE USES ARE <u>ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION PROGRAMS</u> (SO-CALLED "FREE SCHOOLS" AND "DIPLOMA COMPLETION" PROJECTS), <u>COMMUNITY CENTERS</u> (SOCIAL AND EDUCATION PROGRAMS FOR HUMAN BEINGS OF ALL AGES), <u>DAYCARE CENTERS</u> (PRE-SCHOOL AGED CHILDREN OF WORKING PARENTS), <u>DISTRICT ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICES</u> (CENTRAL OR DIVISIONAL), <u>NIGHT SCHOOL</u>, <u>PRE-SCHOOL</u> OR "HEAD START" AND <u>SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS</u>, AND EVEN AS <u>TEMPORARY HOUSING</u> FOR CLASSES WHILE OTHER SITES OR SCHOOLS ARE BEING ENLARGED OR RENOVATED.

SECOND, WHILE THAT PRESENT SURPLUS SPACE IS BEING UTILIZED, THE MASTER PLAN SHOULD BE EMPLOYED TO DETERMINE WHETHER THE SPACE CAN BE EFFECTIVELY MODIFIED FOR EDUCATIONAL USE BY THE DISTRICT'S FUTURE PUPIL POPULATIONS. THAT IS TO ASK, WILL THESE CURRENT PARTIALLY USED OR UNUSED FACILITIES BE ABLE, WITH RENOVATION, TO ACCOMMODATE THE PROGRAMS AND PRACTICES OF THE FUTURE? THE TECHNIQUE FOR INVESTIGATING THIS PROBLEM IS IDENTICAL TO THE ONE FOR SPACE SHORTAGE WHICH ASKED IF THE SPACE COULD BE REMODELED OR ADDED TO EFFECTIVELY.

THIRD, ASSUMING THAT THE PRESENT SURPLUS SPACE CANNOT BE USED EFFICIENTLY NOW AND CANNOT BE MODIFIED EFFECTIVELY FOR TOMORROW, THE MATTER BECOMES ONE OF DECIDING HOW TO DISPOSE OF THESE EXCESS FACILITIES. AGAIN, BECAUSE OF THE GENERAL RELUCTANCE OF SCHOOL DISTRICTS TO DIVEST THEMSELVES OF HARD WON FACILITIES, THE FIRST SOLUTION IS TO LEASE THE PROPERTY TO OTHER PUBLIC AGENCIES WITH THE UNDERSTANDING THAT THESE FACILITIES WILL REVERT TO THE LOCAL SCHOOL DISTRICT, SHOULD THE NEED FOR THEM ARISE IN THE FUTURE.

HOWEVER, IN THE EVENT THAT THE FINDINGS NOTED DURING THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE MASTER PLAN INDICATE NO FURTHER NEED FOR THE PRESENT SURPLUS SPACE, THE SECOND SOLUTION IS TO SELL THE PROPERTY TO WHATEVER AGENCY, ORGANIZATION OR BUSINESS THAT CAN SUCCESSFULLY FUNCTION WITHIN THE ZONING REGULATIONS GOVERNING THE SITE OR SITES. OF COURSE, A COMMUNITY PUBLIC RELATIONS PROGRAM MUST PRECEED ANY LEASING OR SALE OF SCHOOL DISTRICT PROPERTY IN ORDER TO PRECLUDE UNFAVORABLE PUBLIC REACTION.

HERE I WOULD LIKE TO POINT OUT THAT BECAUSE OF THE APPROACHING BICENTENNIAL CELEBRATION AND THE INCREASING INTEREST OF MANY PEOPLE AND ORGANIZATIONS IN PRESERVING OUR PAST, IT WOULD BE POLITIC TO ASCERTAIN THE HISTORICAL OR COMMUNITY SIGNIFICANCE, IF ANY, OF BUILDINGS BEING CONSIDERED FOR RENOVATION, LEASE OR SALE. FOR EXAMPLE, ALUMNI DISPLEASURE AND REACTION TO PROPOSED RENOVATION OF CHERISHED OLD BUILDINGS CAN BE A SHATTERING EXPERIENCE FOR WELL-INTENTIONED COLLEGE ADMINISTRATORS. AND EVEN IN LARGE SCHOOL DISTRICTS FEELINGS HAVE BEEN KNOWN TO RUN HIGH, WHEN THE NEWS SPREADS OF A PROPOSED RENOVATION OR SALE OF THE BELOVED, OLD HIGH SCHOOL OR AN ANCIENT GRADE SCHOOL. IT IS A WISE SCHOOL OFFICIAL WHO INVESTIGATES THESE KINDS OF SENTIMENTS THOROUGHLY AND THEN CONFERS WITH THE VARIOUS POWER STRUCTURES BEFORE MAKING ANY UNFORTUNATE DECISIONS REGARDING THE FATE OF EXISTING FACILITIES.

SUMMARY

RARELY HAVE SCHOOL DISTRICTS HAD THE OPPORTUNITY FOR AN IN-DEPTH EXAMINATION OF THEMSELVES WHICH THE TIMES NOW OFFER. IN ORDER TO DO THIS PROFESSIONALLY, A MASTER PLAN SHOULD BE CREATED, CONSISTING OF A COMPREHENSIVE STATEMENT OF THE DISTRICT'S LONG-RANGE GOALS AND THE PROCEDURES FOR THEIR IMPLEMENTATION. ONCE DEVELOPED, THIS MASTER PLAN SHOULD THEN BE USED TO SOLVE THE DUAL PROBLEMS OF SPACE SHORTAGE OR SPACE SURPLUS. EFFECTIVE LONG-RANGE PLANNING MUST BECOME THE HALLMARK OF ALL SCHOOL DISTRICTS AS THEY BEGIN TO PREPARE THEMSELVES FOR THE 21ST CENTURY! THANK YOU.